



Vehicles leaving Dhaka for the northern districts are stuck in a 25km gridlock from the eastern end of Bangabandhu Bridge to the bypass road in Tangail town. Highway police said the jam was created due to heavy flow of traffic, incessant rains, and reckless driving. The photo was taken at Rasulpur in Tangail Sadar upazila around 4:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Malaysia may consider entry of 18,000 workers

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airport and attended bilateral talks with the chief adviser at the hotel. He left in the evening after meeting President Mohammed Shahabuddin at the Bangabhaban.

Ibrahim said that he would consider the entry of 18,000 Bangladeshis to his country as soon as possible, if all conditions are met.

These Bangladeshi migrant workers could not reach Malaysia by the May 31 deadline mainly because of shortage of flights.

Asked about a cartel dominating overseas recruitment, Ibrahim said the matter had been discussed. The Malaysian government is reviewing the recruitment process to ensure transparency and accountability.

He appreciated the enormous contribution made by the Bangladeshi expatriates in Malaysia and underscored the importance of ensuring decent work conditions and other benefits.

"Any differences between contending companies is not my concern. Our concern is to make sure

whatever is decided must be followed through. We need workers. But they cannot be treated as modern slaves, no matter if they are from Bangladesh or India or Indonesia or other countries. I have said this publicly in the past," he added.

The so-called recruitment agencies must strictly adhere to policies, he said.

Prof Yunus said the Rohingya crisis was a cause for concern for the whole world, terming it a "ticking time bomb".

"We will keep raising the issue. Malaysia will be supporting us in raising that. We can't wait indefinitely. This is something we have to resolve as soon as possible."

He urged the international community to work together to resolve the crisis.

To boost bilateral trade, it is imperative to resume the works of the trade negotiation committee to have a free trade agreement between the two countries, Prof Yunus said.

He congratulated Malaysia on its upcoming chairmanship of Asean

in January 2025. "We discussed the issue of Bangladesh's inclusion as a sectoral dialogue partner of Asean. We look forward to Malaysia's active role for Bangladesh's inclusion in the regional body," he said.

Ibrahim said foreign ministry officials of Malaysia would soon start connecting with their counterparts in Bangladesh regarding the latter's proposal for inclusion as a sectoral dialogue partner of Asean.

Ibrahim expressed his full support to the Yunus-led interim government, saying, "Never mind the exaggeration of some parts of the international media and mudslinging. I personally know you and your passion about human rights and human dignity."

"I fully support your position, your effort to ensure this new Bangladesh with a vibrant democracy and respect for the rights of every single citizen."

Malaysia would give attention and preference to Bangladeshi companies in Malaysia, and Bangladesh should make sure that any problems facing Malaysian companies in Dhaka get prompt attention, he said.

"In some areas Malaysia excels, in some areas Bangladesh excels. Both countries should work together for overall development."

Ibrahim's trip to Dhaka is the first visit by a prime minister of any country to Bangladesh since the interim government took charge.

Prof Yunus said, "We renewed our commitment to take bilateral relations to a new height."

Possible future areas of collaborations could be mobility, sovereign funds, pension funds, private equity funds, health, education, data science, and AI, he said.

The two leaders discussed collaborations in deep-sea fishing, sea bed exploration, marine science, and strategic connectivity between Chattogram Port and Port Kelang.

They also talked about the unprecedented mass uprising that toppled the Awami League government in early August. People, particularly the youth, made remarkable sacrifices in their quest for freedom.

Iran's allies will keep fighting Israel

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"scared for our children, and this war is going to be long".

Israel and its ally the United States have vowed response to the Iranian missile attack, which was largely intercepted but sparked fear in Israel.

Iran said it would step up its response if Israel counterattacked.

In Lebanon, Israeli bombardment has put three hospitals out of service, and yesterday a first delivery of medical aid organised by the United Nations reached Beirut airport.

Lebanon said an Israeli strike on Friday cut off the main international road to Syria, with Israel saying that Hezbollah was transporting weapons through the country's principal land border crossing.

The strike comes after 310,000 people, mostly Syrians, have in recent days fled the war pitting Israel against Hezbollah in Lebanon for relative safety in neighbouring Syria.

The Israeli military said its fighter jets struck Hezbollah targets near the border crossing overnight including a tunnel that "enables the transfer and storage of large quantities of weapons".

On the Israel-Lebanon border, the Israeli military said its forces had killed 250 Hezbollah fighters this week.

And in Hezbollah's main bastion in Beirut's southern suburbs, US and Israeli media reports said intense bombardment overnight targeted the militant group's potential successor, Hashem Safieddine, just a week after Nasrallah's killing.

The Israeli military has not commented on that strike, which destroyed at least five buildings and left a huge crater in the road, an AFP photographer said.

Israel announced this week that its troops had started ground raids into parts of southern Lebanon, a stronghold of Hezbollah, after days

of heavy aerial bombardment.

Hezbollah said it shelled Israeli troops in a border area of south Lebanon yesterday, in the latest such clash on the frontier.

Lebanon's health ministry said that 37 people were killed by Israeli strikes over the previous 24 hours.

The Israeli military said nine of its soldiers have been killed in combat in Lebanon.

In the West Bank, which is separated from Gaza by Israeli territory but has endured intense military raids throughout the war, the Palestinian health ministry said an air strike killed 18 people in the Tulkarem refugee camp.

A Palestinian security source told AFP it was the deadliest air raid in the occupied territory since 2000. The Israeli military said the strike targeted a local Hamas leader.

Calls for restraint have multiplied but months of similar calls to halt fighting in Gaza failed to bring a ceasefire.

Since October 7 last year, Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed at least 41,788 people, the majority of them civilians.

The war has left the besieged territory's 2.4 million facing a dire humanitarian crisis, and in August, the first polio case in 25 years was confirmed.

The World Health Organization said it hopes to give hundreds of thousands of children in Gaza a second dose of polio vaccine from October 14, after a first round last month.

Correction

We regret to inform our readers that an error occurred in our special publication, "The Great Wave." On page 1 and 3, the term "foreword" was inadvertently written as "forward."

We sincerely apologise for the mistake.

The Daily Star retracts story

FROM PAGE 1

billion was financed by six Chinese banks, including \$30 million from Rupali Bank PLC. Additionally, \$230 million was invested in equity by two Chinese government-owned subsidiary companies. Notably, no payments were made by or to SS Power I Limited (SSPIL) from any loan from Bangladesh to the EPC contractors. Instead, the Lenders, through the Facility Agent, Bank of China (Singapore Branch), directly paid the EPC contractors based on invoices raised under the EPC contracts. These payments were made under the strict monitoring, control, and supervision of the Facility Agent, owners' international engineer and lenders' technical advisor with periodic reports submitted to Bangladesh Bank, ensuring full compliance and transparency, and preventing any possibility of defalcation.

d) The project is fully compliant with all regulatory requirements and ensures timely reporting to all relevant authorities. For the avoidance of doubt, all plants, equipment, and machinery designated for import were initially approved by the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB). Additionally, BPDB was issued a Tax Waiver Certificate for each consignment under the relevant Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) from the National Board of Revenue (NBR) to facilitate duty and tax waivers as per the signed Implementation Agreement (IA) and Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). These items were imported under Import Permits issued by the Chief Controller of Imports and Exports (CCI&E) on a case-by-case basis, following recommendations from BPDB. All customs clearance was completed in compliance with the respective Customs House, based on the duty-free certificates from BPDB and the Import Permits from CCI&E. Furthermore, Rupali Bank PLC, acting as the Onshore Security Agent for the syndicated foreign lenders, utilizes its systems to ensure accurate and timely reporting, thereby maintaining compliance with regulatory requirements.

e) To date, the company has contributed 16,053 million BDT to the National Exchequer in the form of Tax, VAT, Customs Duties, and other government fees and charges.

f) The reporter falsely alleged that "S Alam Group laundered \$815.78m" under the project. We categorically deny this accusation of money laundering against SSPIL in the strongest terms. In reality, no unauthorized payments were possible to make from Bangladesh, because payments to EPC contractor, SEPCOIII

were made directly from foreign lenders from foreign lender to EPC contractors' banks.

g) The report further erroneously states that the First LC No. 0000026319150005, dated 29.01.2019, valued at \$121.96 million, and Second LC No. 0000026321150038, dated 30.05.2021, valued at \$792.40 million, were taken out of the country. In so reporting, the reporter demonstrated a significant lack of knowledge of international project financing under the EPC contract. In fact, SSPIL imported plants, equipment, and machinery through Import Permit under EPC Contract. Subsequently, SSPIL submitted all relevant Bill of Entries/Invoices and documents to Rupali Bank for onward reporting to Bangladesh Bank. In its reporting to Bangladesh Bank, Rupali Bank utilized these LC numbers as reference for reporting purpose only as prescribed by Bangladesh Bank.

h) The report inaccurately alleges that one hundred eighty-four fraudulent invoices- 59 related to the first LC and 125 related to the second LC- were uploaded to the Bangladesh Bank server to facilitate the laundering of \$815.78 million, without providing any clarification as to how these invoices are deemed fraudulent. In reality, SSPIL submitted all Bills of Entry/invoice after completing customs clearance to Rupali Bank for onward reporting to Bangladesh Bank. Furthermore, the Bill of Entries/Invoices submitted by the EPC contractors were approved only after thorough verification by the technical advisors, Black & Veatch and Mott MacDonald, ensuring their certifications for direct onward payment by the lenders, eliminating any possibility of error or the submission of fraudulent Bill Entries or Invoices.

i) The report further callously alleged that "there is no import data on our server against these two LCs," referring to a Commissioner of Chattogram Customs House. In reality, SSPIL imported plants, equipment, and machinery under an Import Permit as part of the EPC contract. Since these items were imported using Import Permits, the issue of LCs does not arise. However, Rupali Bank used these LC numbers solely as a reference for reporting purposes to Bangladesh Bank.

j) The report further falsely stated that while the Bangladesh Bank server has entries for those 184 Invoices/Bills of Entries, they are missing from the NBR server. This claim is misconceived and absolutely false. All the Bills of Entries/Invoices are indeed available on the NBR server, as well as accessible at the Chattogram

Customs House.

k) The report alleged that payments were made under fake Invoices/Bill of Entries and from unrelated companies without providing any justification. In reality, there is no scope to make payments against the Bill of Entries/Invoices which are unfounded. The whatever payments were made from Bangladesh Bank in favour of the Chinese Company/EPC contractor were made in pursuance of proper Bill of Entries/Invoices which were duly authenticated by the technical advisors, Black & Veatch and Mott MacDonald as per the loan agreement dated 28.12.2018 and EPC Contract.

l) In regard to an Invoice/Bill of Entry bearing the future date of November 29, 2025, the reporter, despite having access to the original

SSPIL violated the conditions of the Import Permit, a claim that has no basis. In fact, whatever payments were made from Bangladesh Bank against Advance Payment Guarantee (APG) in favour of the Chinese Company/EPC contractors were made in pursuance of proper Bill of Entries/Invoices which were duly authenticated by the technical advisors, Black & Veatch and Mott MacDonald as per the Loan Agreement dated 28.12.2018 and EPC Contract.

o) In reporting the news, the reporter displayed a serious lack of understanding of the true scope of the Import Permit, the reporting system, and the syndicated loan structure in the international joint venture agreement under the EPC Contract. The report itself constitutes a deliberate misstatement and a

journalism poses a significant threat to diplomatic relations with China.

r) Further, the allegations you raised against SSPIL in the news report are baseless and unfounded. There are no details, no evidence, no inquiries to support these claims. However, you gave a false statement to misguide and smear our image in public intentionally without exercising proper due diligence. This constitutes a valid case for seeking damages, and we reserve the right to take appropriate legal action if necessary.

Therefore, we do not wish to provide any further clarification on the details of the matter as they were wrongfully presented in the news report. Instead, we request that you publish a correction across all your digital platforms in the interest of

the project's national interest and the serious implications of such misinformation.

OUR RESPONSE

Following our story, we received two rejoinders -- one from SS Power Limited and one from Rupali Bank. Over the last few days, we reviewed the official data that we used in our report and found that some of those official data from Bangladesh Bank, NBR and Rupali Bank needed further verification.

On October 3, 2024, we sat with officials of Rupali Bank, which originally uploaded the LC-related data used in our story on Bangladesh Bank server. The basis of our story came from that data, as well as other official data. In its official response to our queries at the October 3, 2024, meeting, Rupali Bank confirmed in writing that its officials "inadvertently uploaded 41 wrong invoice dates and 5 wrong invoice numbers" related to these LCs in their reporting to Bangladesh Bank. Such a large scale of incorrect data misled us to our conclusion about the claim of money laundering by SS Power. We now know we made a mistake.

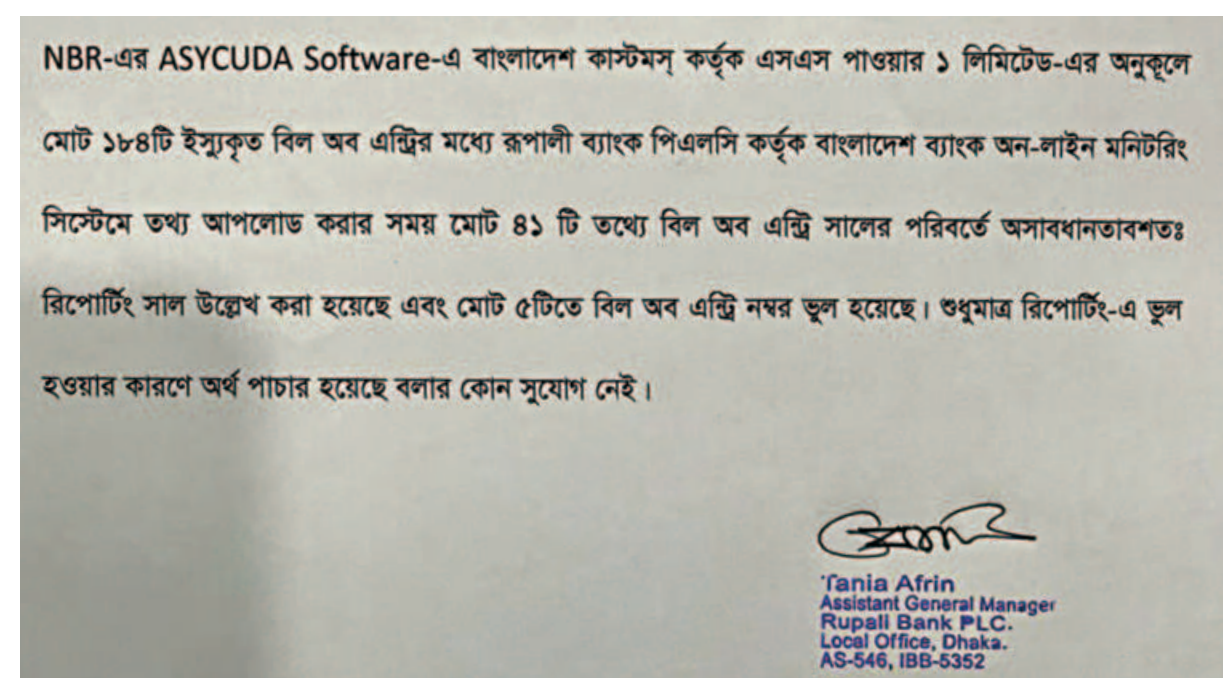
We sincerely regret this professional error, which occasionally occurs when official data turn out to be wrong. Thus, even with the best of intentions, and with no malice towards the subject of our reports, we sometimes end up making mistakes even when we follow the highest standard of ethical journalism.

Nevertheless, we take responsibility for our mistake, stand corrected, and extend our sincere apology to SS Power Limited and our readers.

Within half an hour of the confirmation of wrong data entry by Rupali Bank around 8:00pm on October 3, 2024, we removed the report from all our electronic platforms and published a notice on our website notifying the readers about the removal. We are now retracting the story from our print version.

We want to point out that the article was published in good faith, without any intention to harm or knowledge that such imputation will harm the subjects -- we were never guided by such intention in our 33 years of journalism. The data we used were not our own data, they were official data still available on the servers of Bangladesh Bank, NBR and Rupali Bank. In this case, we fell victim to such wrongly presented information.

We would like to reassure our readers that we will do everything we can to prevent recurrence of such mistakes.



Invoice/Bill of Entry dated November 29, 2020, highlighted a typographical error made by Rupali Bank PLC, which incorrectly typed November 29, 2025. This misrepresentation was presented in a misleading manner, potentially deceiving the esteemed readers of the newspaper.

m) The report further imprecisely alleged that at least 30 are related to EXPORTS- not import by different companies that have no links with the SSPIL. In fact, all documents submitted by the Company to Rupali Bank for onward reporting to Bangladesh Bank are accurate, and specifically related to imports under the import permit.

n) The report also alleged that

smear campaign against the SSPIL.

p) Importantly, the CFO of SSPIL was contacted by the reporter for comments. The CFO provided a detailed explanation and refuted the allegations made in the draft reports, also submitting a written response. However, the reporter deliberately misquoted the CFO's written reply, causing significant detriment to the company.

q) Given the critical nature of the matter involving national interest and the bilateral relationship with a major development partner state, the reporter utterly failed to exercise due diligence before publishing such a scandalous report. This blatant disregard for responsible

your esteemed readers, ensuring equal coverage to undo the ill effect of the original article. We expect responsible and unbiased reporting, not sensationalism. Please do not allow yourself to be influenced by any vested interests and quarters.

In light of the situation, we formally request that you publish a corrigendum within seven days of receiving this rejoinder. Otherwise, we shall be constrained to pursue legal recourse for dissemination of false and frivolous information about our company in your publication. We sincerely hope you will rectify the matter by issuing a corrigendum that includes an apology for the erroneous reporting, especially considering